

We claim:

1. A computerized method for managing patent and trademark fees comprising:

5 inputting identification information for a matter of a client of a firm and a requested fee associated with the matter for payment to an agency as data representing the identification information into a computer workstation;

issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation for transmittal to the agency, the charge payable against an account maintained by an organization separate from the firm;

transmitting electronically data representing first information regarding the charge for the requested fee from the computer workstation to a fee computer system maintained by the organization;

inputting second information regarding the charge received from an external source as data representing the second information into the fee computer system; and,

20 reconciling electronically the data representing the first information regarding the charge with the data representing the second information regarding the charge at the fee computer system.

2. The computerized method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating data representing a fee invoice including the charge at the computer workstation and electronically transmitting the data representing the fee invoice to an accounting computer system maintained by the firm;

generating a client invoice including the fee invoice at the accounting computer system for delivery to the client; and,

generating a firm invoice including the charge at the fee computer system for delivery to the firm,

wherein the client invoice corresponds to the firm invoice such that payment by the client to the firm for the client invoice is used as payment by the firm to the organization for the firm invoice.

3. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the account maintained by the organization is an account with a financial institution, and issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation comprises printing a check for the requested fee payable against the account maintained by the organization on a printer operatively coupled to the computer workstation for delivery to the agency.

4. The computerized method of claim 3, wherein the external

source comprises a statement received from the financial institution regarding transactions regarding the account, the transactions including checks drawn against the account.

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5. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the account maintained by organization is a deposit account with the agency, and issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation comprises generating an authorization for debit of the requested fee from the account.

6. The computerized method of claim 5, wherein the external source comprises a statement received from the agency regarding transactions regarding the account, the transactions including debits made from the account.

7. The computerized method of claim 2, wherein generating data representing a fee invoice including the charge at the computer workstation also comprises printing a paper copy of the data representing the fee invoice on a printer operatively coupled to the computer workstation.

8. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the first information and the second information each include the

amount of the requested fee.

9. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the agency is selected from the group of patent agencies consisting of the United States Patent and Trademark Office, and the European Patent Office.

10. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the computer workstation comprises a computer of a network of a plurality of computers.

11. The computerized method of claim 2, wherein the accounting computer system comprises a computer of a network of a plurality of computers.

12. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the data representing first information regarding the charge for the requested fee is transmitted electronically from the computer workstation to the fee computer system daily.

13. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the data representing the fee invoice including the charge is transmitted to the accounting computer system monthly.

14. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the agency comprises a patent or patent and trademark agency.

15. The computerized method of claim 1, wherein the agency comprises a foreign associate firm.

16. A computerized method for managing patent and trademark fees comprising:

inputting identification information for a matter of a client of a firm and a requested fee associated with the matter for payment to an agency as data representing the identification information into a computer workstation;

transmitting electronically data representing first information regarding a charge for the requested fee from the computer workstation to a fee computer system maintained by an organization separate from the firm, to request permission to issue the charge for the requested fee at the workstation;

issuing the charge for the requested fee for transmittal to the agency at the computer workstation upon receiving approval from the fee computer system, the charge payable against an account maintained by the organization;

inputting second information regarding the charge received from an external source as data representing the second information into the fee computer system; and,

reconciling electronically the data representing the first information regarding the charge with the data representing the second information regarding the charge at the fee computer system.

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17. The computerized method of claim 16, further comprising:

generating data representing a fee invoice including the charge at the computer workstation and electronically transmitting the data representing the fee invoice to an accounting computer system maintained by the firm;

generating a client invoice including the fee invoice at the accounting computer system for delivery to the client; and,

generating a firm invoice including the charge at the fee computer system for delivery to the firm,

wherein the client invoice corresponds to the firm invoice such that payment by the client to the firm for the client invoice is used as payment by the firm to the organization for the firm invoice.

20 18. The computerized method of claim 16, wherein the account maintained by the organization is an account with a financial institution, and issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation comprises printing a check for the requested fee payable against the account

maintained by the organization on a printer operatively coupled to the computer workstation for delivery to the agency.

5 19. The computerized method of claim 16, wherein the account maintained by organization is a deposit account with the agency, and issuing a charge for the requested fee at the computer workstation comprises generating an authorization for debit of the requested fee from the account.

20. The computerized method of claim 16, wherein the first information and the second information each include the amount of the requested fee.

15 21. A computerized system for payment of patent and trademark fees comprising:

a firm computer system maintained by a firm, the firm computer system storing data representing a charge for a requested fee for transmittal to an agency;

20 a fee computer system maintained by a first organization separate from the firm, the fee computer system receptive to data electronically transmitted by the firm computer system and representing first information regarding the charge; and,
an account computer system maintained by a second

organization separate from the first organization and the firm,
the account computer system storing data representing an account
maintained by the first organization and against which the charge
is payable,

5 wherein the account computer system generates a statement
including second information regarding the charge, data
representing which is input into the fee computer system and
reconciled by the fee computer system with the data representing
the first information.

22. The computerized system of claim 21, wherein the statement
is in an electronic format readable by the fee computer
system, and is input into the fee computer system via
electronic transmission from the account computer system.

23. The computerized system of claim 21, wherein the firm
computer system comprises:

20 a first computer subsystem to issue the charge for the
requested fee and to generate data representing a fee invoice
including the charge; and,

 a second computer subsystem to receive electronically the
data representing the fee invoice and to generate a client
invoice including the fee invoice for delivery to the client.

24. The computerized system of claim 23, wherein the fee computer system also generates a firm invoice including the charge for delivery to the firm, wherein the client invoice corresponds to the firm invoice such that payment by the client to the firm for the client invoice is used as payment by the firm to the first organization for the firm invoice.

25. The computerized system of claim 23, wherein the first computer subsystem of the firm computer system electronically transmits the data representing the first information regarding the charge for the requested fee prior to issuing the charge to request permission to issue the charge for the requested fee.

26. The computerized system of claim 21, wherein the second organization comprises a financial institution, and the charge comprises a check for the requested fee payable against the account maintained by the first organization, the check printed on a printer of the firm computer system.

27. The computerized system of claim 21, wherein the second organization is the agency, and the charge comprises an authorization for debit of the requested fee from the account.

28. The computerized system of claim 21, wherein the first information and the second information each include the amount of the requested fee.